

Leach, Deonte (DCOZ)

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From: Eric Lipton <ericlipton@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 10, 2016 12:48 AM **2016 JAN 11 PM 2: 51**
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ); Bardin, Sara (DCOZ)
Subject: Lanier Heights is Worth Preserving--Not Destroying

Hello Chairman Hood, Vice Chairwoman Cohen, Mr. Miller, Mr. Turnbull and Mr. May.

RE: Applicant/Case Name : Residents of Lanier Heights & ANC 1C
Case Number : 15-09

I am writing to respectfully urge you to move ahead with rezoning in our neighborhood to R-4 from the current R-5-B zoning. I have lived in Lanier Heights for 11 years, first on Ontario Road and since 2008, owning a home on Lanier Place.

The District of Columbia is going through a population boom right now that requires a significant increase in housing, meaning there is likely some hesitation among you regarding this request. Lanier Heights, you might argue, is close to the urban center, and thus higher density housing should be allowed on the residential streets.

Yes, there are already a number of major apartment buildings here, mixed in with the single-family town homes. And yes, high density housing has a place in Adams Morgan.

The new multi-family housing at the corner of Lanier Place and Calvert, the new Adams Morgan hotel, the new multi-family housing on Columbia Road at 17th Street at the former Ontario Theater--all of these are appropriate uses in our neighborhood--and outside of the proposed rezoning area. As they are on the main thoroughfares. The intense development along the U Street corridor, along 14th Street, again, all appropriate uses in this city, to help accommodate the influx of residents.

But Lanier Heights is still today predominately a townhouse neighborhood, a community with families, with children, in fact, a growing number of young families with children, including mine, as my wife and I have two young girls, ages 3 and 19 months.

Reject this petition and you will be essentially writing off Lanier Heights. Real estate developers are already (until the temporary zoning freeze) going house to house offering to buy historical townhouses, for cash, no questions asked, at rates that are often hundreds of thousands of dollars above the market rate. Not to sell them to other families. But to turn them into a real estate Frankensteins-multi-family condo buildings rammed into the space of an historic home.

Pause for a moment to consider what is here--and what will be wiped out if you do not act. It goes all the way back to 1900, when banker Archibald McLachlen and an eminent Smithsonian ichthyologist named George Brown Goode developed Lanier Heights, with Goode encouraging his fellow Smithsonian colleagues to purchase lots. The Washington Post in 1905 describes the features of the homes build by Harry Wardman here in Lanier Heights:

"They will be of three stories and nine rooms. Features of the buildings will be the large bathrooms, six feet by ten, wide stone porches, dining rooms, with three windows each; plate glass, leaded and art glass windows, and a nine-foot air space above the third story....The last feature, that of side light, is expected to appeal strongly to the large class that wish something

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with side ground. The arrangement is to be artistic, something new being attained, it is believed in these dwellings."

My house, built in 1910, has some of these same extraordinary features--the original hardwood floors, the white front porch supported by large Ionic columns, the super-thick glass in the front window, even the 1731 street address hand painted on the window of our front door in a thick black paint that has somehow survived 116 years. It is a living link to the history of this city.

I watched as they ripped out almost every historic feature of 1726 Lanier Place, across the street, throwing it into a dumpster, as they turned it into an eight-unit condo complex. Worst of all, they constructed a towering brick wall above the neighboring historic homes, eliminating almost all the natural light, turning the neighbor's small piece of paradise into a prison yard. There is no way that should be allowed under the law. That is not an appropriate use. It is a violent disregard for the principles that have held this community together for a century now. As with the calculation of FAR allowed under the current zoning--which is far too dense for the character of this neighborhood--there is a perverse incentive to destroy what makes Lanier Heights so special--in pursuit of a quick dollar. Harry Wardman, if he were alive today, would make the same point.

The residents of Lanier Heights are not asking for anything unreasonable. We want to maintain the balance that has existed here for a century now. Deny this zoning change--and over the coming decade or so, everyone of these homes, one by one, will be bought up and converted into mini apartment/condo buildings. The financial incentive to destroy them is just too great.

Sure, you will have more units for more people. But you will have destroyed the fabric of a neighborhood--a community, a place, that is sacred in a way. As it is the place we call home.

DC has seen a lot of progress in recent years, tremendous progress. But not at any cost.

Please approve this zoning change. It is the right thing for this neighborhood. And for this city.

Eric Lipton
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(I write this as a private citizen of DC)